African woman in the globalization process: challenges and prospects for the urban poor in Kampala

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African Women in the Globalization Process.

Challenges and Prospects for the Urban Poor in Kampala

Globalisierung erreicht afrikanische Länder in Form von so genannten „Strukturanpassungsprogrammen" von Weltbank und Internationalem Währungsfond. Ugandas Austeritätspolitik war zwar in den vergangenen Jahren vergleichsweise erfolgreich, doch die Kehrseite von steigendem Wirtschaftswachstum ist steigende Armut insbesondere in urbanen Zentren. Ohne die informelle Arbeit von Frauen könnten die Menschen in den Ballungszentren Ugandas nicht überleben. Frauen sind es, die das Überleben ihrer teilweise auf dem Land zurück gebliebenen Familien sichern, da Männerarbeitsplätze, sprich: formelle Lohnarbeit, knapp ist. Und doch ist gerade die Informalität der Arbeit von Frauen – als Straßenhändlerinnen, Kinder- und Hausmädchen und Prostituierte – die Ursache steigender Frauenarmut. Will Strukturanpassung die Schere zwischen Arm und Reich nicht vergrößern, so bedarf es Programme, die explizit auf die Situation städtischer Arbeiterinnen eingehen wie beispielsweise Kleinkredite, aber auch Infrastruktur zur Selbstorganisation und Selbstvertretung von Frauen im informellen Sektor.

1. Globalization and female poverty in Africa

The world has changed dramatically since the early twentieth century. These changes have brought about new challenges to the whole concept of government and to the role of the nation state as we move further into the new millenium. Globalization is a principal aspect to these new changes. Globalization of the world economies is sharply limiting the independence of action of the nation-state. Governments are now losing influence. Private enterprises, summarised as the „market", are gaining power. Privatisation is a key word. Across the political spectrum, liberal, conservative and formerly socialist parties have all accepted the down sizing of government, the privatisation of many activities and the reduction of government debt (Shaw 1994; Spybey 1996; Paolini 1997).

In Africa, governments are in a crisis. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) have made clear that assistance would not be made to these countries unless appropriate policies are put in place. Prescriptions often involve substantial and detailed microeconomic reform within a country with considerable hardship for its people. Many governments who conducted policies designed for the social well-being of its people can no longer do so. In today's world, governments must fashion their policies to meet the wishes of the international market place. As a result there is a significantly growing disparity between rich and poor people within countries. This may not matter so much if the poor were also becoming better off compared to their earlier standards, but in many cases this is not so. The idea of a living wage is no longer relevant and wages cannot even support the smallest of families (Haleh/Denis 1992; Randall/Good 1997).

2. Globalization and poverty in Uganda

In Uganda, the term globalization is very closely linked to Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Compared to the economic

chaos that reigned under the Amin regime, the Ugandan economy under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) has made an astounding recovery. It has been rated the third fastest growing economy in Africa after Mauritius and Botswana. Inflation decreased from 240 per cent in 1986/7, to 0.6 per cent by June 1993. The annual growth rate of gross national product per capita fluctuated from 0.7 per cent for the period between 1965 and 1973, to 6.2 per cent during 1973 to 1980, to 2.4 per cent in 1980 to 1987, to 5.7 per cent between 1987 and 1995. IMF and WB lauded Uganda for successfully implementing strict austerity programmes. These have sponsored Ugandan economic recovery programme, which includes civil service reform, a push for foreign investment, privatisation, and the military demobilisation campaign. The civil service reform included a downsizing of the service from 300.000 positions to 215.000 by June 1993, and ultimately to 145.000 positions. Between 1990 and 1994 150.000 civil servants were dismissed (Aake 1995; Bazara 1999).

Uganda's economy may be one of the fastest growing in Africa, but it also has some of the worst socio-economic problems. The economic recovery is neither nationwide nor enjoyed by the majority of the population. Poverty is pervasive, especially among the new category of the poor who live in urban areas, majority of them are women. It is estimated that 96 per cent of these women live on only 5.000 Uganda shillings (roughly $ 3) per capita per month. The per capita income at $ 170 per year (1993) is one of the lowest in the world and it is certainly not sufficient for proper nutrition or for everyday necessities such as soap, salt, sugar, and matches. With the spread of AIDs, the poverty seems never ending. Conservative estimates suggest that in 1993 ten to twelve per cent of the population were HIV positive, with higher levels reported in urban areas (Dicklitch 1995/96).

How can we understand how so many poor people survive in urban areas, when the informal networks have disappeared and only the wealthiest can enjoy the fruits of the shamelessly bold market economy? Today's large cities survive on female labor, tireless and meagerly paid; a tiny percentage of women actually „make it".

This article is an attempt at seeing globalization from a more grounded, and local perspective, against the backdrop of the concept of poverty in relation to urban growth. As we embrace the new millenium, urbanisation has become a powerful force throughout most of the world. This development has taken place very quickly, in Africa and some parts of the Third World. The number of people who live in the cities has exceeded the number who live in the countryside. No one doubts that „globalised modernity" is a real phenomenon even though at times modernity may constitute technology of a humble nature as a transistor radio or a bicycle. There is a differential in terms of access to these technologies, and that some of the poor people in the so called modern cities are not touched by them, „from so high in the sky, the wretched of the earth seem so far away" (Darby 1997, 46).

A major shift of the twentieth century was the emergence of cities in Africa. The move to the cities began with the need to look for opportunities for waged labour and the increased labor market created by colonial operatives. Research on these migrations focussed on men because employers were primarily concerned with men. Women remained the „second sex" in the cities until at least at the end of the colonial period (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997).

Today cities more than ever depend on women for their very existence. Many women have become city dwellers, and more women migrate than men. This is a new phenomenon which has its explanations in the on-going globalization process with its adverse effects especially on the poor. As a result of the extreme conditions in the rural areas, there has been a constant flow of poverty-stricken young women to towns. To these economic and social pressures we can add the attraction for young women towards a chance to a new life, free from the pressures of rural custom, and to a „modern way of life". We must, therefore, look at women in the overall context of rapid social, political and economic changes brought by globalization. I want to scrutinize the new roles of poor women who find themselves in the fast growing urban

centers. The city woman we are refering to is likely to be less educated, and to be constrained by the multiple responsibilities of home and family management. She will probably not be able to earn an income in a formal setting. Living in the countryside, she could have sold or bartered her crop surplus to obtain things she did not have. She cannot do this easily in the city where surpluses are hard to come by and cash is needed. Her response is what we need to discuss. We need to understand how the poorest women and their families survive and how their survival strategies could be supported. A contribution towards a system of poverty definition is essential to assist government and other agencies' response to poverty.

2.1. Women and urban survival in Kampala City

Global capital tends to locate in large cities and urban areas. This in turn influences the internal mobility of labour. Migration towards opportunity is a positive process towards poverty reduction. Over the past century, the social and economic roles played by women have evolved dramatically (Little 1973). Long confined at home and field, overlooked by their menfolk and early colonialist alike, African women worked, thought, dreamed and struggled. They migrated to cities, invented new jobs, and activated the so-called informal sector economy to become Africa's social focal point. As a result, despite their lack of education and relatively low status, women are now Africa's best hope for the future (Lomnitz 1994).

The new role of women in Uganda is peculiarly a phenomenon of the city. With the circle of droughts that began in 1973, there has been an increasing flow of poverty-stricken women from the villages to Kampala and other fast-growing towns. This is human evidence of the terrible conditions in the countryside. The most blame has been placed on the global adjustment policies which have placed a lot of emphasis on issues of international concern like trade, industrialisation and investment. Agriculture, the major source of livelihood for most of rural Africa has suffered tremendously. Far from having been rejected by their families, these women, especially young girls, have instead been sent by their families to the city to earn the meager funds they need to revitalize their dying villages. More and more it is a question of keeping the family group alive, in the city and in the country. These women on arrival in the cities have combined a number of strategies, above all by setting up micro enterprises.

At a first glance, women seem to be going about their modest trading activities in front of their own homes, in tiny neighborhood squares, or in market places. To many it would seem like they are working in order to satisfy their need for pocket money, amusements for their children, clothing or jewelry. But this stereotypic view does not withstand closer scrutiny. The husbands' reduced or nonexistent income has changed the purpose of women's work both among working class women and among most office employees (Luggala 1996). In the cities paid work is essential to women's daily bread. Little by little, women have gained a toehold everywhere. Their frequent illiteracy often requires them to work clandestinely, and this keeps their profits from being eaten up by taxes and licenses. However, the competition is severe. Because these women don't expect to be paid by the hour they can survive with the tiny profit margins that make their services competitive compared with expensive goods bought in the formal sector or with imports. Cooked dishes served on the sidewalk are less expensive than in the restaurants. Locally produced goods sold illegally are cheaper than in the local super market; and the domestic work of a young female relative or little girl is cheaper than that of a salaried houseboy. Food, clothing and many basic services are now provided mostly by women. Truth to be told, women support the city's population. Ironically, they are the poorest of the cities' poor in Africa (Okine 1993; Obbo 1994).

Historically, colonial administration blocked girls' urban migration as much as they could, more or less assimilating it to prostitution. In Kampala the laws of 1914 against prostitution and that of 1918 against adultery and fornica-

tion were invoked to limit girls' travel. New laws in the early 1950s authorized repatriation to the region of origin without trial for an unmarried women caught wandering the city (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997, 74). African men knew too well how much women were needed in the village and in the fields. They also feared pernicious effects of the city on children's upbringing. Both conservative Muslim and missionary ideology reinforced these predispositions.

Today more than ever, town life is in women's hands. The lack of regular jobs in industry and the service sector, accentuated by the economic crisis, has caused many young women to go into the informal sector. It is estimated that 70 per cent of such women are under the age of 25 years (Monitor 1998). One girl who was setting out her goods carefully, explains why she joined the trade: „I am alone, my parents died when I was 13 and they left me nothing. This is what I do for a living" (Torkelsson 1995). This is the survival instinct for many of such girls. Sometimes they work under the instruction of their mothers or guardians. Other girls who were forced to work have dropped out of the highly competitive education system. Little girls from poor families often come to the city to help their better-off relatives with domestic work and child care. In Nairobi they are called ayas, while in Kampala they are simply known as baby-sitters.

2.2. Feminisation of the informal sector and female poverty

It is evident that the informal sector will continue to be a source of employment for the majority of the poor urban people. Despite their meager earnings, their contribution to their well being and that of their families is significant. Informal female trading had the effect of absorbing unemployment and at the same time enhance the economic empowerment of the majority of urban poor women. Among the twenty four actions proposed by the African platform for Action at Beijing summit, there was one in particular which spoke of the need to recognize the importance of the informal sector in enhancing the economic empowerment of women. How do we proceed from here?

It is very interesting to observe the shift in the gender balance in most of the service jobs. Under colonialism most if not all subaltern jobs in the cities were held by men. Often these jobs were service tasks directly supporting the white authorities, for example, such as interpreters, secretaries, couriers, and postal workers. This is hardly surprising when we realize that colonial administration essentially sought to make men their auxiliaries. The same phenomenon was observed in the private sector: Colonisers employed men as tailors at their sewing machines, as cooks and kitchen helpers, as houseboys, and children's nurses, as gardeners, washermen and ironers. It has been claimed that men were the ones who benefited from the minimal instructions likely to make them understand the whites' demands.

Thus men were the majority of the immigrants at the beginning of colonialism. In South Africa for example in the cities of Natal colony, almost all domestic work was done by 33.000 men. In the cities of Cape Colony and Johannesburg, launderers, food vendors, and tailors were all men at first. Only after 1930s did women wake up to these jobs. Women remained clandestine beer brewers, a role that they already had in traditional society. In South Africa there was more freedom for women to migrate, but this is hard to generalise for Africa as a whole. It is suggested that the trades that became less profitable and no longer required initial capital (which women do not have) tended to become predominantly female. This was true with the laundries and the selling of food on the streets. Socially marginalised in the extreme, in the cities in misappropriate numbers in relation to their work, increasing numbers of widows, unmarried mothers, orphaned girls, are excluded from regular work. Gradually all is left to them is to engage in prostitution, actually a disguised form of begging (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997, 137).

This emphasis on the state of poverty shows that their lot is desperate. Many of such women end up as domestic servants or bar girls in the cities, being exposed to further exploitation. Selling on the streets, petty trading and hawk-

ing as well as prostitution are the characteristic features of the poor urban women. Living in the countryside she could have sold her crop surplus to obtain things she did not have. She can not do this easily in the city where surpluses are hard to come by and yet cash is needed. Instead of selling the crop surplus in the country side, for example, urban women need cash. Their answer to this new situation is the invention of the gullet or „mudaala“ (Ahikire 1997). This is a makeshift stall made from papyrus stems or simply a piece of cloth where the woman displays her goods for sell. The term „mudaala“ has become synonymous with the female form of trading; the adaptation of a traditional African practice to an urban context.

The life of such a trader leaves no room for rest. For seven days a week, twelve months a year, in rain or sun shine, she is on the road side open for trade. A writer describes her working environment: „The ground is muddy on account of the rain that fell in the night. It is mixed with excrement and urine.“ (Torkelsson 1995) The enigma is how women manage to survive on meager proceeds of a few shillings or potatoes or perhaps a couple of tomatoes.

The underlying reason is that there is no other way to survive. If the women want to live, they must trade, otherwise they will die. Work begins at sunrise when the woman goes to the wholesale trader and collects the goods she hopes to sell that day. It is a day-to-day existence. The income generated will usually be enough to buy basic food stuffs for her and her dependants, but it certainly does not cover a visit to the doctor in the event of illness, far less sending the children to school. The initial capital is the single most important factor for the profitability of the business. For instance in Uganda a mere 1,000 Ugandan shillings (that is nearly fifty cents of a US dollar) is the minimum for a day. A few women can manage more than this. If unable to pay for their goods at the end of the day, their career as traders comes to an end. It may be a flexible system but it is characterised by chronic insecurity. Sometimes the trader may earn a surplus above what is needed to feed herself and her family. The savings are usually short term, the money being used to fund the next day's purchases. Alternatively, it will be invested in such a way that the woman will not enjoy the benefits in her life time. Especially when it is in form of payment to a burial association. Very occasionally, the woman may spend the money to share refreshments with friends. Buying food from farming villages, transporting it to markets and other distribution centers, including selling it at market is also their work. Their involvement at the various stages of food distribution effectively brings almost the entire network under their control.

Beyond agricultural products other everyday trading activities exist. Selling imported commodities such as sweets, apples, chocolates, handkerchiefs, torches, battery cells, cosmetics, second hand clothes, food items, is what women do – thanks to the trade liberalisation policies. Urban centers are filled with hawkers, grocery kiosks, selling everything from food stuffs to motor vehicle spare parts. Informal pubs and fast food restaurants are also common. Selling cooked food at buses, train and lorry parks and gas stations or even by the road side, allows women to engage in this trade. Women move with merchandise from one place to another targeting customers in their homes and even offices and other places of work. These moving shops often target fellow women who may wish to buy things and don't have time to go shopping. A few of these mobile shops have trading licenses but the majority does not. They are always at great risk to get in conflict with city council authorities.

Although female factory workers have advanced significantly, the modern formal sector is in fact a preserve of men. Women working in factories are usually heads of households. Waged labour is an answer to a marriage situation that is both fragile and uncertain. But women with children know how to cope. In Tanzania, 40 per cent of them have their children kept by their families, generally by grandmothers; 30 per cent pay salaried woman or ayah; 20 per cent bring a younger female relative from the village; five per cent use their own parents; and the remaining five per cent co-ordinate with female neighbors. In other words, the small salary they receive and the disrespect

the are held in leaves them with no illusions about their active participation in factories (Obbo 1977, 1990; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997).

While domestic service has declined in importance in the developed world as compared to other segregated occupations which dominate women's work in the labor force, this occupation has persisted through slavery, feudalism, and capitalism (Romero 1994). Today, in all areas, it is mainly a women's job. Most people's incomes do not permit them to hire salaried workers. Invisible domestic work has become a rule. It is sustained by rural relatives who dream of finding the work or the promotions that do not exist in the rural areas. Here again we see the traditional characteristics of female labour. The most typical case is that of workers, salaried men, and women go to the city with a young woman from their family to help them in their households. Urban homes therefore became places, where little sisters and other poor relatives go in hope of attaining a basic education. Since village education and sanitary conditions are often terrible, parents feel that their daughters would better be cared for and educated in the city (Monitor 1998).

Domestic work is repayment for the service provided by the host family. More and more, with the expansion of informal labor in the city girls may obtain an apprenticeship, particularly in trade or handicrafts, and even save a little money. However, the result has been clearly an increase in child labor. Little girls in particular are used to back up market women in their work or to take care of the children while their mothers worked outside the home. Households usually have more girls than boys. In Ouagadougou (Mali), these little girls arrive in groups, led by adults who pretend to be their relatives. But the phenomenon seems to be organised trafficking. The little girls, or rather their parents had agreed to this. School which no longer guarantees employment has become worthless. Better the girls are sold to support their families, in the hope to set aside a little money – very often for their brother's marriages (ACFODE 1996).

Domestic work forces young girls to work. They are (mis)used without any limits on their working hours, without social protections, and with little or no remuneration. Although many wealthy families do of course provide poor rural relatives real assistance and hold up their bargain by getting the girls to school, this is not true in many cases. Different forms of abuses come on the way are common.

Prostitution has in some cases arisen out of women's initiative as a form of trade or coinciding with other work of female urban dwellers. Such women could be considered as entrepreneurs with petty merchant capitalism, selling their own services, which excluded sex: the whole range of household tasks such as preparing meals, serving beer, selling their own beer which is clandestinely brewed, laundry and ironing. These could be termed self-employed who as a result of increased pressure to survive have resorted to prostitution.

„Malaya", a Swahili word, significates an arrangement where independent and discreet women rent and even buy rooms or shanties to receive men and act out married life, treating and caring for their clients like husbands. What is unique about this is that women were their own bosses, most having broken off any connections with their rural families. Some of them make significant profits which enable them to buy land and also to educate their children. Some invest in businesses and have commercial licenses for shops run by themselves or someone else. Yet we should not exaggerate their successes. Many of the women who make money out of this activity are now old women. Nowadays the young women who have taken up the trade can not even afford the rent. And many young girls end up offering themselves under street lights in the city at night. These are the poorest and are called „watembeyi" or walking prostitutes, who solicit on the streets. Two thirds of them are poor girls who left their villages with little or no schooling (ACFODE 1996; Monitor 1998). Others look for clients in hotel rooms or recruit customers right from their own homes, even in front of their doors. Their work on the steet attracts harassment from police authorities and the shocked public and even from other prostitutes who are not working as street prostitutes (Torkelsson 1995).

Despite all hardships, the trade has brought a certain wealth to urban women, although most of them live in poverty. Usually migrant women have not broken ties with their families. As good daughters and wives they go to the cities to help their rural households survive, pay taxes and debts which incurred e.g. during the drought and to amass the necessary bride prices for their brothers' marriages. Their work is indeed the only chance to give them financial independence. Unlike in many countries, African governments have never sought to tax their work. The difficulties of their lives, however, and the extremities of their position expose them to frequent unsecurity, poverty, and even violence. Everywhere, many of them are victims of venereal diseases.

Today, in addition, many are condemned to AIDS. Around 1990, a study estimated that atleast 80 per cent of the Kampala prostitutes were sero-positive for AIDS. Today it is likely that almost all are infected. Not only will these women die of it but, having lost their livelihood, they will, descend into poverty first (Obbo 1994; Wallman 1996).

3. Strategies for future prospects

It has become obvious that when forces of globalization, those which essentially deepen the world market, interact with the structures inherited from the Ugandan colonial past, the consequences will be more poverty unless there is genuine democratisation and not privatisation. The question therefore is how do we open opportunities for the poorest people? How do we ensure that the benefits of global integration are equally shared, between the rich and poor and nations, and between women and men? The immediate responsibility lies with national governments, perhaps powerless to steer world markets, but able to minimise the damage and maximise the opportunities within their countries. Policies to reduce poverty and to empower the poor can become part of a strategy for empowering nations in a globalised world (SEWA 1992; SEWU 1998). The following are some key policy options for such a strategy.

3.1. Gender equity, empowerment and building capacity for women

Markets tend to treat women as equal to men, but do not treat women as individuals in their own right. Therefore the key questions for Uganda are: How is gender division of labour affected by globalization? What rights do women enjoy in their new work positions in the labour market? Did their rights increase or decrease in the globalization process?

Some argue having the opportunity to sell their labour or their products and earning a living on their own, women are economically less dependent on men, and their bargaining power within the household is increased. In analysing the dynamics of poverty, another important aspect is not only access to and opportunities for earning income, but also the ability of poor women to develop their capabilities. Structural causes of poverty include mechanisms which restrict the formation of human capabilities of poor women and restrict opportunities to use these capabilities. Globalization can be analysed with regard to whether the opportunities offered by new employment also represent an opportunity for women to realise their potential and develop their capacities.

Development approaches which focus on the potential of women have to reflect these mechanisms in their instruments. Development cooperation can strengthen mechanisms for public policies, including public action for the poor. Institutions of civil society, which are working for social change, social justice and human rights, can be supported and strengthened. Mechanisms which serve to co-ordinate the actions of workers collectively to bargain with employers and improve the quality of the work place can be supported and strengthened (e.g. development and enforcement of legal rights, health and safety standards, the right to establish worker committees, the right to unionise).

This implies choice and agency on the part of women. However, many women don't have an alternative to the work they do or to the employment they are engaged. Nevertheless, in the urban areas in Uganda, the poor people know traditional survival strategies in several ways.

For example associations and organizations by the urban poor are very important. Rather than understanding the urban poor women as ignorant and disorganised, it is important to acknowledge the various ways in which these women organise themselves. Solutions which view women as purely passive victims needing to be rescued by external agencies will not work. Women rather operate through contradictory processes, in which they engage in resistance and subversion as well as acquiescent as survival strategy.

Associations and self-help groups have developed out of the shared interests and concerns of women. Many of these groups intend to reach one or more goals through co-operative activity. Some of these various informal groups have managed to advance groups' issues and interests through collective resources and effort. Community functions are organised around such groups. Mutual support, which involves exchange of help among the members of a group especially in times of stress is very evident. A well known example are burial groups. The subordinate status of women creates the need and the conditions for group-based resource mobilization. I would suggest to categorise poor urban women's common organisational tendencies in Uganda into two groups: ethnic and locality networks, and women's unions.

Ethnic and locality networks have gained significance. Newly urbanised women organise in co-operative groups, and rotate credit associations, some of them participate in larger community umbrella organisations. The informal networks of friends who come together in groups of not less than three are also very common.

Other groups consist of people closely associated in an urban locality or even family members engaged in the same occupation. These are usually between ten and fifty people. Each member of such a group has to pay a specified amount of money on a periodic basis. The period of payment varies from one group to another. It could be daily, weekly or monthly. Contributions are pooled together and given to each member on a rotating basis until everyone has received a contribution.

These groups don't have fixed capital nor written records. They are therefore vulnerable to abuse. Furthermore, since these are poor women and mostly mothers, no one would risk lending them money. Creditors fear that „she will use the money in buying food and fish to eat" (Okine 1993, 163). Such groups rarely belong to any organised credit association. It should however be noted that these women's groups not only allow the members to survive. The co-operation also constructs a new identity, an identity based on independence and self-reliance. In the long run, from this identity can emerge economic, social and political power of women.

Encouraging expansion of formal programs for women's basic and vocational education is very essential. This will give women and girls the opportunity to diversify economically, that is their job opportunities. Such diversification is absolutely necessary if women's well being is to be enhanced. Capital resources required are relatively small and the infusion of technological and managerial knowledge will help blend conventional wisdom with new expertise. Women usually have little access to education and capital resources and a combination of both may have the potential to be highly effective in creating a workforce of knowledgeable women.

At this stage we should also recognise the importance of unions for women workers. The lack of interest in unionism among women workers does not result from any inherent characteristics of women. For historical reasons the culture of mainstream trade unions does not sufficiently address the needs of working women. The issues of sexual harassment, lack of access to credit, and capital, childcare, and social subordination of women are rarely central concerns. Women as a result remain either unorganised or mobilise in informal unregistered associations that are free of daunting bureaucratic procedures.

In Uganda we find numerous informal and unregistered organisations, some of them describe themselves as unions, for example unions of small traders and street vendors. However, these organisations without a legal status are often less effective in giving the members

identity and collective power improving their living and working conditions. The informality of unregistered associations also makes it difficult for members to seek redress in case of deceit nor can they acquire capital assets easily. Furthermore, international donors tend to give financial support mostly to legally registered associations. And on the other hand such funding is extremely important in the earlier stages of mobilisation (Hosmer/Swasti 1994).

One way of organising is to form unions exclusively for women. This approach could however be diversionary and unproductive in trades where a substantial proportion of the workers are men. However, well structured women-only educational programs could play a role in giving confidence and expertise to women, enabling them to demand and receive strategic positions in union organisations. Training and development programs promote leadership abilities among women, a pre-condition for changing the image of unions as essentially male organisations.

Moblising self-employed women is a key strategy in empowering poor urban women. Traditional shop-floor recruitment practices are irrelevant for mobilising self-employed poor women. In most cases their collective actions for economic and social empowerment are not likely to be directed towards an identifiable employer or trade. Formal organisation can only be effective if it allows women to address the problems that place them in vulnerable economic and social positions. The example of the „Women's Forum" in India in this case deserves close attention. With 80,000 members, it has proved successful. Central to this success has been a co-operative banking system (Hosmer/Swasti 1994). This offers an innovative way of freeing women from the exploitation of traditional moneylenders and from their marginalisation by mainstream banks.

Sustainability lies in developing leadership qualities of the members of unions and self-help movements. Training courses ought to make them realise their state of powerlessness as well as the power of the empowerment. Promoting consciousness, taking a broader view that includes a wide variety of activities is important. These activities range from giving street vendors and the self employed information about legal rights or sources of credit, to campaign for better civic amenities, free contraceptives, and immunisation for their young children. The holistic approach of improving the overall quality of working and living conditions is the goal. Organising non-violent demonstrations is another activity. These strategies help members of unions and self-organised groups to challenge the discriminative practices that keep women in an inferior social status. Women's newly acquired courage and economic power are often conducive to improving the relationship with their husbands who also struggle against poverty and degradation (SEWA 1992).

Another major strategy is that of organising domestic workers. The domestic workers, although in some cases waged employees are difficult to organise. The nature of their employment prevents them from coming in contact with their fellow workers.

Women domestic workers are generally young and view their economic position without pride. They hope that this type of employment will be a temporary phase in their lives and will last only until they get married or find another job. These workers need to be proud of their vocations and they lack an identity as workers. They need support to build confidence in work, especially in exploring alternative employment opportunities.

It is not easy to implement rights of domestic workers even when they are legally granted. However counseling services and legal advice would make unions attractive to members. The long-term achievements could include rights to maternity leave, minimum wages, a pension and period of notice for job termination. It is important at this point to assess the roles of youth workers associations.

Women's movements are also essential, solidarity with them highlights the importance of issues such as abortion, sexual harassment and domestic violence. The dilemma in dealing with women's organisations is that domestic workers find themselves collaborating with middle-class women who are employers of domestic workers.

3.2. Identifying new risks and vulnerabilities created by globalization

The process of structural change in the globalising world economy is a source of new risks. Corresponding to each risk, one typically finds a group of people who are the main bearers of risk, and another group of people who are relatively insured against the risk. While poverty is passed on inter-generationially, absolute poverty is often the result of disaster, rapid changes in labour conditions, living conditions or sudden deprivation. An understanding of the dynamics of poverty, gender and globalization therefore requires the identification of the different types of risk which newly occur by globalization. If we see poverty reduction as a process by which the causes of deprivation and inequality are addressed, then the identification of risks is important. Disasters and sudden hardship whether caused by periodic drought or market downturn can often be predicted and insured against.

A number of specific risks associated with globalization are identified below, and the role of mediating institutions in managing globalization and safeguarding against some of these risks is examined.The globalising process is riding on the back of technology, bringing technology and technological change. On the one hand this is seen as a great benefit. The use of the Internet for example is widespread in Uganda although this is still a preserve of the well-to-do. But in the long run programs can be structured to meet specific needs of poor urban women, particularly by providing access to appropriate technology and instruction in its use. It can include literacy training, skills development, group activities, information and training on everyday issues, and work towards improved health, status and sustainable development. Some NGOs have already successfully demonstrated that such training can improve socio-economic status of disadvantaged women.

On the other hand technological change bears risks that directly affect the urban poor, e.g. pollution of the environment and destruction of habitat. The poor are typically concentrated in crowded and often highly polluted residential areas. In Uganda such places are known as slums, where women headed households are the majority. In these areas there is no infrastructure or any kind of social services provision like schools, hospitals, roads, or water and sanitation. Interventions should provide resources to civil society organisations to build infrastructure for the poor people living in slums.

3.3. Re-examination of the public policy implications of globalization

The reality of a globalised world economy is increasingly constraining the policy choices open to national policy makers. Globalization itself is essentially firm-driven, and the key players are transnational corporations, banks, their networks and alliances. Increasing globalization means that there has been a shift in power and influence from publicy financed to privately financed organisations, with the potential for the latter to dictate agendas. Increasingly too, the criteria and rationales which are applied to make decisions important to society as a whole, are fiscal rather than social, and short-term rather than long-term. It is important to note here that it tend to be the poor and most disadvantaged members of society, mostly women, who shoulder the burden of the current public sector deficits. The disappropriate impact of structural adjustment-related policies on women and the poor has been well documented.

4. Conclusion

The premise of this discussion is that interventions should include an understanding of how, in a particular locality, the dynamics of globalization and gender (women) are interacting. This contributes to the broadening of the opportunities offered to poor women by globalization, as well as lowering inherent dangers of the of globalization for women. Workers organisations and women's groups are important bargaining institutions. Many linkages and networks are already building a civil society. NGOs and women groups can through access to new

information and communication technologies can become effective in creating alliances that can counter globalization. Government and these groups in the civil society are capable of taking public action against poverty. A key in the relationship between poverty and globalization then, is to support social institutional arrangements that will not exclude the poor women, that will not exploit the poor when they are included, that will be supportive of women's empowerment towards gender equality and that will enable the poor to develop their own capabilities.

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